A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias.

--Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891)

How have Americans envisioned more perfect worlds, and what have they done to bring their ideas to life? This course examines the broad sweep of such thoughts and experiments, with special attention to the optimistic heyday of the early nineteenth century. Reading utopian literature and studying the history of experimental communities, we will explore how reformers thought about work and leisure, individualism and community, gender and sex, charisma and faith, technology and nature, in creating the environments that they believed would allow human beings to best flourish. We will consider how utopian thinkers and communal experiments were shaped by the broader society. We will ponder together how to evaluate their successes and failures. And we will think about prospects for utopian thinking and intentional communities.
This course employs a variety of reading assignments, class discussions, postings on the class website, more formal writing assignments, and student presentations to the class to deepen our understandings of the questions raised by the study of utopia. It seeks to enhance students’ abilities to undertake critical analysis, historical studies, and research. To this end, each class meeting will involve completion of some combination of reading, writing and thinking assignments to be completed in preparation for the class.

The syllabus specifies 16 opportunities for "Postings" on the class Blackboard website. A "Posting" should be at least one full paragraph in length (150 -200 words), and should be well written (using appropriate grammar and spelling). It should seriously engage an idea or issue clearly related to the week's reading, perhaps posing a question for class discussion, or suggesting an interpretation, or connecting one set of readings with other issues raised in class. The syllabus provides "prompts" but students are welcome to create their own focus. Students should complete at least 6 postings before Fall Break, and at least 6 after Fall Break for a total of 12 posts during the semester. Postings will be required, but not graded individually.

Posting are due no later than 10 am on the day for which they are assigned.

The class assignments also include three papers. The first paper, about five pages in length, is due Sunday, October 2 at 8 pm. We will discuss the expectations for this paper during class on Monday, September 26; after the paper has been submitted, it will "workshopped" during class on Monday, October 3. A revision of this paper is due Monday, October 10, at the beginning of class. The second paper, also about five pages in length will be formulated around a class presentation to be scheduled between November 7 and November 14. This second paper will be discussed in class on Wednesday, October 19. The final paper will also be related to a class presentation, to be scheduled between December 5 and December 12, but it will be expanded into somewhat longer essay to be completed as the final assignment for the seminar. Conferences about this paper will be scheduled on or before November 23. This essay, 7-10 pages in length, will be due at the time regularly scheduled for the final exam for this class.

Reading assignments are listed on the syllabus below under the class for which they should be completed.

Three books have been ordered for purchase:

Donald Pitzer, ed., America's Communal Utopias (Longleaf Publishers, 1997)

Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward (Penguin paperback edition)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Herland and Other Stories (Penguin paperback edition)

Other reading assignments are available at the BlackBoard site for the class, unless otherwise noted.
Schedule of Classes

Wednesday, September 7: Why Study Utopias?
   In class reading: John Winthrop, A Model of Christian Charity

Monday, September 12: The Original Utopia
   Reading Assignment:
      • Selections from Thomas More, Utopia (on Blackboard)
   Posting #1: How did More envision "the good life"?

Wednesday, September 14: Early American Searches for Religious Utopia
   Reading Assignment:
      • Donald Durnbaugh, "Communitarian Societies in Early America," in Pitzer, Utopias
      • Karl J. Arndt, "George Rapp’s Harmony Society," in Pitzer, Utopias
   Posting #2: How do these early religious societies compare to the "City on a Hill"?

Monday, September 19: Origins and Evolution of the Shakers
   Reading Assignments:
      • Priscilla Brewer, "The Shakers of Mother Ann Lee," in Pitzer, Utopias
      • Robert Sutton, Chapter 2: Shaker Communities, in Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Religious Communities, 1732-2000
      • Primary Documents on the Shakers, from Gregory Claey's and Lyman Tower Sargent, The Utopia Reader (on BlackBoard)
   Optional: The Shakers, a film by Tom Davenport and Frank DeCola (1974) 30 mins. available streaming only at http://www.folkstreams.net/film,84
   Posting #3: How did the Shakers survive into the 21st century?

Wednesday, September 21: Early Nineteenth-Century Secular American Utopias:
   The Owenite Model and its Variations
   Reading Assignments:
      • Donald Pitzer, "The New Moral World of Robert Owen and New Harmony," in Pitzer, Utopias
- Robert Sutton, Chapter 1: New Harmony and Owenite Communities, in *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Secular Communities, 1824-2000*


Posting #4: Did Owenite utopias turn their backs on the industrial revolution?

**Monday, September 26:** Approaches to the Study of Utopia: Scholarly Variety

*Note:* This class will help students prepare to write the first paper

Reading Assignments:
- Mark Holloway, *Introduction, Heavens on Earth* (on BlackBard)
- Donald Pitzer, "Introduction," in Pitzer, *Utopia*
- Donald Pitzer, "Developmental Communalism: An Alternative Approach to Communal Studies," in *Utopian Thought and Communal Experience*, ed, Dennis Hardy and Lorna Davidson
- Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, Introduction, *Utopia Reader*

**Wednesday, September 29:** The Founding of Oberlin: Religious or Secular Utopia

Reading Assignment:
- Carol Lasser and Gary Kornblith, Chapter 1: The Commitment to Racial Egalitarianism from manuscript in process *Elusive Utopia* (on BlackBoard)

Posting #5: Was Oberlin founded as a *communal* utopia? How important was individualism in early Oberlin? How important was religion?

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Your first paper, about 5 pages in length, broadly focused on an effective approach to the study of antebellum communities, and using concrete examples of communities from assigned readings, is due on Sunday, October 2 at 10 pm.

Send your paper as a Word Document via email to carol.lasser@oberlin.edu

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**Monday, October 3:** Writing Workshop in Class.

*Assignment:* **Bring 3 copies of your paper to class.**

**Wednesday, October 5:** John Humphreys Noyes, Oneida, and the Drive for Perfection

Reading Assignments:
- Robert Sutton, Chapter 4: Oneida Perfectionists, in *Communal Utopias and the America Experience: Religious Communities*
• Lawrence Foster, "Free Love and Community: John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Perfectionists," in Pitzer, Utopias

Posting #6: Did Oneida treat women equitably?

Monday, October 10: Visualizing Utopia: Class will meet at Allen Art Museum.
Assignment: Revision of your first paper due before class;
Send your paper as a Word Document via email to carol.lasser@oberlin.edu

Wednesday, October 12: Searching the library for utopia.
Class will meet at Mudd Library.
Reading Assignment:
• Robert Fogarty, Introduction, All Things New, pp. 1-23
• Please review the list of communities suggested for study for the second paper and class presentation.

In-class assignment:
You will complete a worksheet distributed during the library session.

Monday, October 17: Technology: Friend or Enemy of Utopia?
In Class Showing of Fritz Lang film, Metropolis
Reading Assignment:
• Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward, Author’s Preface and Chapters 1-15

Posting #7: What impact does evolving technology have on visions of utopia?
Does technology free people from labor or enslave them to machines?

Wednesday, October 19: Looking Backward, Looking Forward
At this class, you will make a commitment to a topic for your presentation and second paper. Reading Assignment:
• Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward, Chapters 16-28 and Postscript.

Posting #8: What would Edward Bellamy say about the film Metropolis?

Fall Break

Monday, October 31: Gendering Utopia
Reading Assignment:
• Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Herland (entire).
Posting #9: What issues of gender does Gilman insist that utopias must address?

**Wednesday, November 2:** Planning Presentations and Papers
Assignment: Complete the Paper Planner (to be found on BlackBoard) before coming to class. Bring three hard copies.
This is a working session.

**Monday, November 7:** The Persistence of Religious Utopias
Student Presentations
Reading Assignment:
- Jonathan Andelson, “The Community of True Inspiration from Germany to the Amana Colonies,” in Pitzer, *Utopias*

**Wednesday, November 9:** Late Nineteenth-Century Utopias
Student Presentations:
Reading Assignment:
- Robert Hine, “California’s Socialist Utopias,” in Pitzer, *Utopias*
Posting #10: Please react to the presentations you heard on Monday.

**Monday, November 14:** Socialists, Anarchists, Eastern Religions
Student Presentations
Reading Assignment:
- Gordon Melton, “The Theosophical Communities,” in Pitzer, *Utopias*
Posting #11: Please react to the presentations you heard on Wednesday

**Wednesday, November 16:** The 1930s: Communities of Support
Student Presentations
Reading Assignment:
- Robert Sutton, Chapter 5: Great Depression Secular Communities in *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Secular Communities*
Posting #12: Please react to the presentations you heard on Monday

**Monday, November 21:** Utopia in the Post World War II World:
Reading Assignment:
- Excerpts from B.F. Skinner, *Walden Two* in Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *Utopia Reader*
- Robert Sutton, Chapter 6: Modern Communal Utopias in *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Secular Communities*
Posting #13: Please react to the presentations you heard on Wednesday
Wednesday, November 23: NO CLASS. Required Conferences will be scheduled instead. At these conferences, you will be asked to choose a post 1965 intentional community/utopia for study. See list posted on BlackBoard for suggestions.

Monday, November 28: Back to the Future? The Communes of the 1960s
   Reading Assignment:
   • Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Chapters 7-8, in Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective
   Posting #14: Using your historical knowledge, is distinctive about the intentional communities of the 1960s?

Wednesday, November 30: Making Communities
   Film Showing: Brotherhood of the Spirit
   Assignment: Complete the Paper Planner (to be found on Blackboard) before class. Bring two hard copies to class.

Monday, December 5: Presentations
   Posting #15: Please react to the presentations you heard today. (N.B. This post is due by midnight December 5)

Wednesday, December 7: Presentations
   Posting #16: Please react to the presentations you heard today. (N.B. This posting is due by midnight December 7)

Monday, December 12: Conclusion and Celebration

Class Attendance

You are expected to attend all classes, and to be prepared for all classes. If you are unable to attend the class because of ill health, or another equally serious reason, you are expected to notify me in advance. You are expected to participate in this class, and you cannot participate if you are not present, and your participation will not be as effective—for your learning or for the learning of others in the class—if you are not prepared. Unexplained absences will be treated as unexcused absences.
Grading

Grading is an art, not a science. I strive to grade responsibly and fairly. Your grade will be based on all aspects of the class, including your class participation, your postings, your four papers (both versions of the first paper, the second and third papers), and on your class presentations.

Below is the basic formula I will use—but please know that improvement over the course of the semester or spectacular work will receive notice. Also note that you cannot pass the class unless you complete all written work, required postings, and presentations.

Papers:
- First Paper, First Version: 8 points
- First Paper, Second Version: 8 points
- Second Paper (worksheet as part of grade): 16 points
- Third Paper (worksheet as part of grade): 16 points

Class Presentations
- Each Presentation = 10 points: 20 points

Postings
- 12 required, with extra credit possible: 16 points

Class Participation (remember, you cannot participate if you are not present, so please be sure to provide information on any unavoidable absences)
- TOTAL: 100 points

You are required to write and sign the honor pledge on all written work:
"I have adhered to the honor code on this assignment."

For more information on the Oberlin College Honor Code, see
http://new.oberlin.edu/conservatory/academic-resources-and-support/honor-code.dot

And

8/22/2011